My black Mammy

A TRUE STORY OF THE SOUTHLAND

By JEFFERSON PENN

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A True Story OF THE SOUTHLAND

By JEFFERSON PENN

Sketches by JOSEPH M. GUERRY

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To my wonderful Mother—Annie Spencer Penn;
and to her maid, given her when a child,
my black Mammy

MAMMY LEETHY-LOU

INTRODUCING MAMMY-LEETHY

THE NEGRO MAMMY, before and after the Civil War, was a really unique person never duplicated in any other walk of life in all the history of human beings.

She was neither a slave nor a servant, neither an equal nor an inferior. And yet she was all of these.

There were few families of any size, and most of them were large, that felt they could manage without a mammy for their children. And while the majority seldom fully realized the practical, presiding position that black Mammy held in the house—held in fact over the whole place or plantation—yet the love, the respect, the loyalty they gave Mammy must remain one of the sweetest memories of all the Southland.

Her presence, her personality were not only a comfort and a joy, her place was never questioned.

Black Mammy-Leethy, and she was blue-black and blue-true, was a mid-wife, a doctor, a teacher, a philosopher, a nurse and a servant to all the family. She was manager and dictator to all the servants and all the colored, doing anything around the place. Actually, even the Master, the Big Boss, made Mammy his confidante and consultant about many matters concerning the household, from

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the Mistiss on down to the sorriest darkey on the place. It was to Mammy-Leethy that he sent samples of several varieties of potatoes and other crops, for her to have cooked and served to the Mistiss. And when the Mistiss signified which she liked best, Mammy would let the Big Boss know so he could go ahead with his planting. Only through Mammy could the father find out how Miss Annie, the mother, was really carrying the baby; the things she wanted done each day, to what she wanted for Christmas.

"How's the weather this morning, Leethy? What's the news? Ring that bell and ask them darkies if they going to sleep all day! Some of the hands, Leethy-Lou, look a little peaky. You better hand around some molasses and sulphur."

The lady of the household quietly used black Mammy as the whispering messenger to the Big Boss for any particular personal request, knowing full well that Mammy, in her sly, suggestive manner, would whisper it over successfully.

While the children: "Mammy, please, you ask Mother to ask Father let me go to the candy stew!" Or "To Please buy me that gun."

Mars Frank demanded just as much obedience and respect from the eleven children toward Mammy as they gave him. Although Mammy could often soften his wrath and save them a whipping, and even tried on occasions to cover up their "backsides" with her apron.

One day, "plug-ugly" Jeff, the second son, sitting in the children's dining room, refused to eat his food. Just as Mammy was begging him to eat, Jeff threw a spoon and hit Leethy in the face. Mars Frank happened to be passing by and saw it all and in spite of Mammy's begging, Jeff got a peach-tree switch on his legs that stopped the spoon throwing for some time.

Mammy could hum a lullaby that would put the most fretful child to sleep. Where Miss Annie often failed, she could get them to take castor oil, or do most anything for that matter. When they minded her, Mammy had a love story and song of her own making full of romance and happiness.

And when Jeff was bad, she would moan and whine a Leethy-made hymn, full of sadness and sorrow, all the time pretending to wipe her tears away:

"Dis here po Mammy's gwine ter leave yer
An nebber come back no mo';
She's gwine ter swim dat Ribber Jordan
An lan on dat golden sho'."

A song like this would soon have the naughty Jeff crying too and promising to behave.

Any refusal from anyone about anything never bothered Leethy-Lou at all. She knew that if she just kept on mumbling, kept on whining and looking sad, she would come mighty near getting what she wanted by and by.

"Leethy Lady" had infinite patience with everybody on the place, with the sole exception of her husband, Fernaldo.

Fernaldo was the conspicuous coachman, the bragging butler; and, although much older than Leethy, he had quite a hankering after liquor and other women. When Fernaldo got on his brass-buttoned coachman coat, his high hat and kid gloves, and got out of sight of Leethy, he could surely strut high, wide and handsome.

Leethy-Lou bore Fernaldo nine children and although she fussed at him all the time, calling him "dat lazy, lyin' nigger," she was indeed very proud and insanely jealous of him. On more than one occasion when she smelt some other woman's Sweetheart Hair Grease on Fernaldo or heard the "yard niggers" whispering and tittering "Uncle Fernaldo done foun' hisself 'nother yeller gal!" she would run him out of the yard with a skillet. Then she would pout for days, mumbling so that he could hear: "Fool nigger. Runnin' atter dat hi-yaller. Gwine ter tell Big Boss an de Mistiss too, 'tain't no room 'roun here fer a cheatin-black-man!"

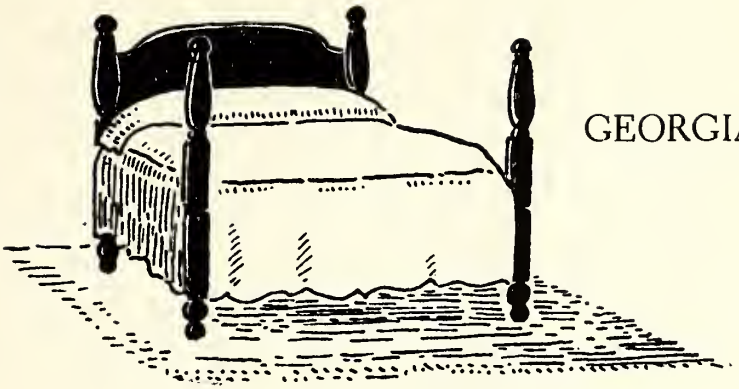
THE HOME

PLACES, as well as people, must have an appealing personality if they would carry on to some permanent influence. And at the time of the Black Mammy regime in the Southland, the home became the center of all family life. Distances were great and roads bad. There were no automobiles, no picture shows, no beauty parlors. The large families entertained each other—frequently. And they were real visits in those days. Three months were not unusual and a few weeks were considered a short stay.

Mars Frank loved young people and Miss Annie's eleven sisters and brothers acclaimed her as the "smartest, very sweetest one

of us all!" So the house was a welcome home not only to all relatives and kinfolks, of whom there were many, but to all schoolmates and legions of friends. Even the far and near country preachers made their headquarters there. Under Mars Frank, the lavish provider, Miss Annie, the warmly generous housekeeper, and Mammy as efficient Lieutenant, no more comfortable, well-fed, satisfactorily served place could be found. And this particular home did actually function from four-thirty in the morning, Mars Frank's rising time, to any hour necessary at night.

From the moment Miss Annie would meet them half-way down the front walk with a true welcome all her own, until Mammy-Leethy "packed the satchels" for the parting, all the guests were really "at home" and hated the time of leaving.



GEORGIA FORTUNE

WITH PARTICULAR PAINS, great care and accuracy, Mars Frank not only tried to get each and every one in his employment to save and put away in his safe at the factory something for winter time, but he took the tedious trouble to list all the taxes. With much dignity the Big Boss brought his "listin" sheet to Fernaldo's and Leethy's cabin.

"Well, Fernaldo, what shall I put down for you and Leethy for the Sheriff to tax?"

Both with one accord: "Lord Gawd, Mars Frank, we ain't got nothin' er tall to put down on dem ar tax books!"

"Got nothing, Fernaldo? You got a Georgia fortune, ain't you?"

"Don't know what dat is, Big Boss."

"Why, it's a feather bed and a lady love!"

Mammy burst out in a big laugh. "You makes me so shame, Mars Frank! You knows you gwine ter pay our'n anyhow, so write it down yer own good way, please sir."

TOTIN-HOME

THE VERY HARDEST, most trying duty Black Mammy had around the kitchen, the smoke house, the pantry, the coffee bag and sugar barrel, was the tantalizing "totin home" habit of all the help through the back gate. Miss Annie and Mammy were supposed to be the only ones who carried the big leather basket of keys that unlocked every drawer, bin and closet. But they both, in trying to hide the keys, would constantly forget where they put them, although the basket was supposed to hang right in front of Mars Frank by the side of the mantelpiece.

Often "jes fergittin ter lock dat smoke house do'," Leethy was constantly missing things; and occasionally finding some of them,

hidden underneath a suspiciously bulging apron, or wrapped in a shawl, or tucked up under a bonnet.

It was understood that a plate of biscuit or the balance in the chicken skillet or "jes a cup er" sugar was toted out without a question. They didn't even think about it ever being called stealing, it was "jes 'em ar lef overs" so why not take them on home?

Something like this would come up: "Miss Annie chile, Leethy's jes got ter drive dat Dinah gal outen dis yard an on back ter farm work. Caught dat gal las' night wid er half er side er meat tied under her bustle!"

Of course, all of them had all they wanted of everything right from the "big table" but their cabin cupboards never could have too much, so it was a very tempting pastime—this "totin dem lef' overs home."

ROMANCE

WITH FOUR SONS and seven daughters in our family where Mammy-Leethy held sway, naturally romance rose and "co'tin" was carried on.

Mammy loved love and a yard full of suitors, and she always kept the second parlor fire lit and the blinds wide open in readiness for callers. Next to gospel hymns, which she moaned and worded according to her own feelings, she enjoyed ragging a love song—often made up on the spur of the moment—patting her foot or smacking her hands to keep time:

"Don't you hear dat sweet man comin'
Er gallerpin down dat road,
No wonder dat hoss is pantin',
He's er bringin' er lovin' load."

Romance finds a strange path oftentimes. The pretty fourteen-year-old daughter who was Mammy's favorite and whom she nicknamed "Buttercup" fell dead in love with a liquor-drinking, fiddle-playing cavalier living in the next county. The suitor was an aristocrat born, in fact, he was a mighty close kin cousin of Buttercup. Tall, good looking, he carried himself and handled his horse like a true Southern gentleman. But both liquor and the ladies had "scandalized" his name. People called him "that no 'count rich man's son." And gossip gabbed that while drunk, he played the fiddle for "poor white trash" frolics and that no kind of work, only gam-bling all night seemed to suit him.

In spite of all the scandal about him, this fiddling fellow was a real love-book beau to Buttercup. She loved his jaunty air, his nonchalant manner and his violin sent thrills to her toes. In spite of Mammy's and the parents' watchfulness, Buttercup managed to see him. Hearing a certain love call from his fiddle, she would slip off on her horse and meet him somewhere, and poor Mammy, always uneasy, would follow to find Buttercup crying in her suitor's arms. He had long since been forbidden the house and Buttercup told she must not see him. Brought back by Mammy from these escapades, she would lock herself in her room and refuse to eat.

They sent her off to Salem Female Academy, finally, with black Mammy along as maid and guardian. But Miss Sophie, one of the teachers, caught Buttercup several times slipping out to see

her sweetheart, so they had to send her back. Mammy had already been called home to mid-wife a new baby for Miss Annie.

All the other ten children were obedience itself to the father, Mars Frank; and even the slightest tremble on the Mother's lip would get immediate loving-mindfulness.

But Buttercup could fake a faint any time and always posed as the frail one of the family. Even Mammy agreed that she was truly a "spiled thing." Not knowing what else to do, the parents placed Buttercup entirely in Leethy-Lou's charge and the spiled thing ran away to Mammy's cabin on all occasions.

Mammy's resolution of any difficulty was to take it to "de Lawd" in prayer. And now she started some "sure nuff" spiritual praying over her child so loud you could hear her all over the house and yard. Finally she resorted to other methods. She made some sassafras tea to soothe Buttercup's nerves and to pacify her loving spell. She had a blue gum darky chew up some asafoetida pills, which she put in a snuff box under the child's bed. But nothing did any good to change that spiled thing's mind about that no account suitor. Things got "wus and wusser."

Then Mammy, never admitting defeat, refused to eat and took herself off in a trance. The third day the angel spirit came to her!

Down on the Staples' Plantation at Sandy Ridge, Mr. Philpot, the white overseer, was going to give a coming out frolic for his

daughter, Dulcina. Dulcina was a pretty girl, just about the size of Buttercup. Leethy learned through Cindy, one of the Staples' negro hands, that the "struttin suitor" was going to play the fiddle for the Philpot party.

Mammy-Leethy slips one of Miss Buttercup's prettiest ruffled dresses out of the closet, douses it with "Heavenly Love" perfume and tells Cindy that Miss Buttercup is sick and wants Miss Dulcina Philpot to wear this "putty" dress to the party.

Dulcina did wear that come-and-get-me dress and she "wo' it right!" With eyes sparkling, cheeks like roses, breasts "er bobblin'," she was truly the belle of the ball and the men flocked around her like bees. But at every turn she was making eyes at that fiddling fellow, and she swung closer to him on every round. Dulcina was using everything she had, and Dulcina had plenty!

The "Fiddler" kept his jug of liquor nestled close beside him, and after each tune he kissed it deep and heavy. Ere long, after midnight, Dulcina's spell began to work. The fiddling man, Buttercup's darling, handed his fiddle over to another, and went after the belle of the ball. Drunk as he was, he danced like a dream, cuddling Dulcina closer and closer and whispering hotly in her ear.

As for Dulcina, her dream of days and months had come true. With the step of a winner and the grace of a queen, she wrapped her love around that fascinating devil and ignored all others.

And so, since liquor, passion and youth must have its way, just

before the cock crew, they slipped away from the party and took that "longest but lovingest route around." Neither cared what happened nor how soon.

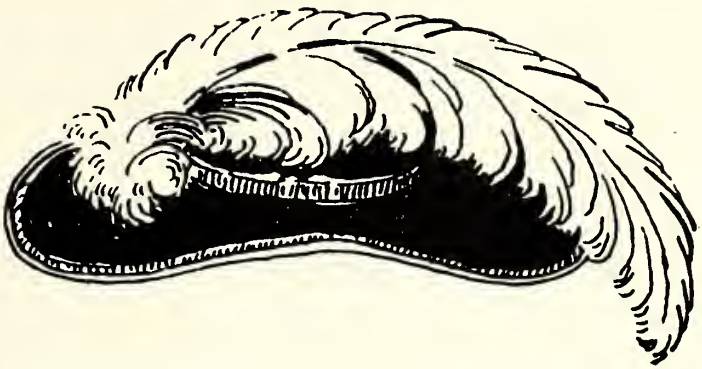
It was not very long before there was a whisper going around: "Dat ar Dulcina Philpot is gwine ter have a baby by dat ar gamblin fiddler!" It needed no help, of course, to spread such a scandal far and near, but Mammy took particular pains to keep the tongues wagging. Plantation darkey whispering could find its way around every fire side in that country.

Dulcina took a long trip—to see her kinfolks in Alabama.

The aristocratic suitor went to join the army.

Buttercup, completely disillusioned and the ardent love light gone out of her eyes, was sent to Baltimore to visit her cousin.

Mammy-Leethy got down on her knees and thanked her spiritual stars for showing her the way.



THE RED HAT

For Buttercup, the change of scene and company worked wonders. The Baltimore beaus were more up to date and the rich relatives gave their country cousin a whirl at the theaters, shopping and street car rides.

Missing Mammy's "spiling" and petting almost as much as Leethy missed her child, Buttercup constantly remembered how much Mammy did love and long for a flaming red hat. Baltimore was shopped from start to finish to find the very fanciest red hat with fluttering feathers.

When Miss Annie told Leethy-Lou: "Miss Buttercup is coming home, Mammy. Have Fernaldo drive you in the rubber-tired carriage to meet her at the railroad station," Mammy strutted on

the stars. All day long she turned up her nose at the other darkies and sang:

"I'se gwine ter meet my Buttercup chile
Er rollin home on dat too-too train;
In my lap I'll hole her all de while,
So's she'll nebber leave me again."

When the time finally came and Mammy paraded down the front walk to the rubber-tired carriage where Fernaldo, all dyked out, presided on the driving seat, the yard niggers peeped around the house or hung on the fences as they saw Leethy Lady roll her eyes at her coachman husband and heard her holler out: "Better drive mighty nice, big black man, dis here lady is er-ridin wid de bottom ob de trunk all ober her!"

During the forty miles to the station, Mammy grumbled at Fernaldo for every rut he would jolt. She was so excited and nervous she had to make him stop the carriage several times so she could be "excused" behind a tree.

They arrived at the depot two hours ahead of time. Leethy with great dignity and care, slid her two hundred pounds out of the carriage and trying to imitate Mars Frank, rolled her eyes at Fernaldo and said in a loud voice:

"Water an feed an rub down dem hosses, big black boy, whilst dis here Leethy Lady does er little stretchin an er struttin up an down dat flatform. An stop makin eyes at dat yeller 'oman, Fer-

naldo, cause I speck to find yer right here when I gits back!" Then, mumbling to herself, "Sho Gawd hopes dat train's on time. Dis here fool Leethy is anx-yus an jumpy to de bery pit ob my bowls."

The depot darky, George Flax, came bowing and scraping up to her. "Fo Gawd, ain't yer Miss Annie's Leethy-Lou? How's de Big Boss an de chillum? What'd Miss Annie sen me? Come on in here an warm yerself!" Then he turned to Fernaldo, "What d'yer say, Fernaldo? Got anything on yer?"

George Flax and Fernaldo were brothers in the same lodge—the "Evening Sons of Glory"—and they loved liquor and the ladies just about the same. Mammy had mighty little time for Brother George Flax, especially since the last lodge supper where Flax had drunk most of the liquor, eaten all the vittles and tried to feel of Mammy's leg!

So she just waved him aside with a disgusted grunt he could plainly hear as she switched herself on to the front "flatform," muttering to herself, "Dat big mouth gutty Gawge! Better keep his thick lips an hands to hisself. Nebber did have no hankerin atter dese town darkies nohow."

Finally the train rolls in; out jumps Buttercup smack into Mammy's arms and such hugging and shouting you never did hear. All the time Buttercup held on to the bandbox tight, carrying that precious red hat—the sure enough surprise present for Leethy.

Every now and then on the way home, Mammy would hint:

"Whatcher got in dat big box, honey chile? Mus be somethin mighty swell. Tell yer Mammy all erbout it." And finally, just before they got home, Mammy begged so hard that Buttercup had Fernaldo pull off on the side of the road. Carefully she opened the bandbox and handed that flaming red hat over to Leethy.

Mammy really rolled out of the carriage with the red hat "histed" high. "Bless Gawd! De red-bird is sho gwine ter fly high now! Hug me tight, Honey. Ain't you Mammy's own sweet chile!" Throwing off her maid's cap, she swung that red hat down over her right eye and switching and strutting up and down that road, raised her voice in one of her jubilant made-up songs:

"Dis red-bird flyin high
Almos rech de sky!
Brush by, all you black folks,
Maybe I'll see you by an by!"

She was "cake-walking" with such a spread, she scared Fernaldo's horses until he dared say, "Restrain yerself, 'oman. Git back in de carriage. De debbil wars red an yo sho gwine ter meet him in hell wid dat hat on!"

Mammy could hardly wait until the next Sunday. And then she wore the red hat to the big meeting at Lick-Fork. Mighty nigh all the Plantation darkies followed along, gazing and gaping at the "Red-bird." Of course the hat created quite a sensation all around the church and all through the service.

As if to punish her vanity, the congregation emerged after service to find a sprinkle of rain falling. But Mammy wasn't one to let a little rain stop her. Quickly she reached down, nervous and excited as she was, and flipped her skirts up over the red hat. But as she tottered into a trot down the road, a howl went up behind her. In her haste she had thrown up over her head not only her overskirts, but all her underclothes as well!

Her grandchild, Sanora Sue, ran after her screaming, "Law me, Granmammy, you is er showin all yer hind-parts!"

Fussed and fretted, Mammy stops in the middle of the road, rolls her eyes and shouts, "Hush yer mouth, gal! Dese 'hine-parts' is eighty years old. Dis here hat is bran-new!"

THE "SUN-CHILE"

NOT SO LONG after this, just as the Mistiss and Mammy planned, Buttercup caught herself a nice Baltimore beau, married and went to live in the big city. Trials and tribulations took hold of Leethy the very day all the other children started back to school.

Now Mammy had named her favorite gal chile "Annie-Frank" after both the Mistiss and the Big Boss. But her nickname was "Sunshine." She was not only the best looking, with the lightest brown skin of them all, but she really carried her sunshine with her—singing, smiling and dancing around the whole day. White and black were all glad to have her near them. She could

outdance any darkey on the place. And it was she who "histed" the tunes and led the singing at the Lick-Fork church and with her high whining soprano, she sent the spirit all through that shouting congregation.

Trouble reared its head in the form of a high yellow-buck-darkey named Sandy Mack, who lived down on the Spencer Plantation. Sandy Mack drove the best mule team around, and carried a lot of red on his harness. He was a banjo-picker from down the country and could shake a mean foot on the frolic-floor. The colored folks all around called him "Big Sweet," and "Big Sweet," carrying his head high, toting love pills in his pocket, doused with "midnight cologne," was simply a hell-cat among the women.

Mammy often accompanied the Mistiss on her calls, and on a drive to the Spencers, Mammy had seen "Big Sweet" and she just naturally hated that yellow high-smelling man from the first. "Big Sweet" was sometimes pressed into service by the Spencers to act as second coachman or footman, and he was with them on the day the Spencer folks came to say goodbye to the school children.

He immediately spied Annie-Frank over the back fence, dressed up in a red gingham for her eighteenth birthday, and love hit them both at first sight. "Sunshine" rolled her eyes at him and it came over her that at just the sight and smell of him, she was up and ready to go anywhere, and do anything. Sandy Mack, for his

part, was exerting himself to the utmost, to send his spell all the way through "Sunshine."

But black Mammy, with eyes in front and back of her head, was peeping through the window blinds, and she smelt-the-spell! She stomped out on the back porch: "Come right in dis house, gal! Stay way from dat ar yeller debbil! Dat ar man gwine ter git somethin you nebber knowed you had an sen yer soul-ter-shame!" And as she dragged the reluctant girl inside, "Ef you ebber does speak to dat ar loud smellin-nigger-ergin, I'se gwine ter blister yer hide from yer head ter yer feet!"

But the "Big Sweet" spell was on and did its work. Under it, Annie-Frank even schemed Sandy Mack into the Lick-Fork church choir, to give them legitimate chances of seeing each other. Soon this was not enough, however, and many a time, "Big Sweet" would ride his favorite mule on a secret path up the Spoon-Creek road and while Mammy was putting the young children to bed and Fernaldo was washing the supper dishes, "Big Sweet" was rapping on "Sunshine's" cabin window. They learned to be very sly about slipping off together. And only once did Mammy, coming out of the yard, hear that Spencer mule nicker. The very sound sent sadness to her soul.

Thus in spite of all black Mammy's pleading and praying, "Big Sweet" found his way with "Sunshine" and she gave birth to a "Sun Chile." Leethy-Lou was laid low. She went away down in the

low grounds of sorrow and shame. Dressed in her black calico, she moaned day and night:

"Dis Leethy lies deep down in sorrow,
Dar's a mighty shame on my name.
De good Lawd's done fergot me,
I knows I'se all ter blame!"

In pity for Leethy, Mars Frank rounded up Sandy Mack and made him marry Annie-Frank. Miss Annie read Leethy a chapter in the Bible and prayed with her. But no one could stop the plantation darkies whispering about the "Sun Chile." Mammy was never reconciled, and every time Sandy Mack came to visit his wife, he would find Mammy with cotton rags stuck in her nostrils.

"I jes cain't stan needer de sight nor de smell of dat yeller debbil," she would say mournfully.

SUNDAY SAM

QUITE A DIFFERENT FATE awaited another of Mammy's children. From the quiet old Virginia plantation to the exotic streets of Constantinople is a long way, but that is the road that Mammy's son traveled. This one was born on a Sunday morning and Mammy promptly named him "Sunday Sam," explaining that he and work fell out the day he was born.

And so it seemed. Sunday Sam never wanted to do any work, and since he proved no good on the farm or around the house, Mammy tried to get him to teach school and later to become a colored book agent. It was no use. All Sam wanted was music. He had a fine natural voice and would hover around the piano in the

Big House until he was allowed to sit down and play. Then, while never knowing a moment's training, he could rattle off any song that he had ever heard, or that anyone would sing to him, without a falter. He was as good on any other instrument—truly a born musician. He would make a flute out of a sappy twig and a mandolin out of a board. Anything to make music. Any song to sing or make up out of his own head seemed to saturate his soul with delight. Polite as a dancing master, always clean and well-groomed, even when in overalls, Sunday Sam had the manners of a Chesterfield and carried himself like a cavalier. But no work could anyone get out of him.

Gradually his mind fixed on one idea—to get to New York. Day and night, he begged Leethy and Fernaldo to send him to New York to take music lessons. All the white folks as well as the darkies on the place believed Sunday Sam had talent and finally they chipped into a collection to buy his ticket. Once there, they told him plainly, it was up to him to take care of himself.

Leethy cried and Fernaldo fussed as Sunday Sam departed in state on the train. He had his hair well greased and his trunk was a paste board satchel.

But in the big city, his troubles began. He first tried to find in Harlem one of Fernaldo's cousins, but was told she had "done moved." Finally he ran across a certain Reverend Hairston—a darkey who used to preach in the Lick-Fork church. Bragging to

the Reverend about his singing, he was finally given a room in the preacher's house and a place in the choir. But sad to relate, somehow, some way, the city church choir did not think much of Sunday Sam's singing and they began scheming to get rid of him. Reverend Hairston and his deacons held a meeting and decided that if they could get Sunday Sam to Europe, he would surely become a great grand opera singer. Sam thought so too.

With fifteen dollars in his pocket, contributed by the deacons, he got a job as a dish washer on a freight steamer to England. When Sam wrote Mammy that he was "gwine to cross dem deep waters" she moaned and groaned for days. That was the last she heard from her child for some time.

Landing in London, Sam soon found out that "dem ar cuius folks" were attracted by neither his singing nor his color. In hardly no time, Sam's last dime was gone and he was hungry. Dejectedly creeping around the big London town, he happened to see a sign that read "American Embassy." Anything that had "American" in it looked mighty good to Sunday Sam. Just as he started up the steps of the building, who should come out but Miss Winnie Watkins from Patrick County, Virginia!

"Why, Sam, what in the world are you doing here?"

"Bless Gawd, Miss Winnie, I sho is glad to see you!" And he told her his sad singing story.

"Well, that's too bad, Sam. What can I do for you?"

"Please, Ma'am, go back in dere and write on dat big house paper and jes tell 'em Sam is a good dinin' room waiter."

They both knew that Sam understood nothing about service —or work either, for that matter—but Miss Winnie's heart was kind. And with a real recommendation, well written on that American Embassy stationery, Sunday Sam was a changed colored man.

Some twenty odd years later, as my wife and I started to Europe, all Sunday Sam's folks begged us to try to find Sam in that strange land. "We knows he's probably at de bottom ob de sea by now, but if you can, please do try to find Sam."

We had forgotten all about Sunday Sam as we arrived in Constantinople. We had inquired for the best restaurant in the city and had been told to go to Maxims. Picturing Paris and New York Maxims, we went there for dinner. And who should take my hat and coat but Singing Sunday Sam from home! The reunion was overwhelming for all of us. If possible, Sam had gained in looks, in polite manners, and in pleasing personality.

When we were finally shown to a table, I asked the Russian girl who seated us, who owned the restaurant, thinking to put in a good word for my old friend. She replied, "That black man you see out there, Mr. Samuel!"

And at last Sam told us his story over a bottle of wine at our table.

"Well, you knows, Mr. Jefferson, all them Patrick County

folks surely thought I could sing, while those New York darkies just wanted to get rid of me. After getting that wonderful letter of recommendation written on American Embassy stationery by Miss Winnie's husband, I worked my way across the Channel into France. There I seen it was sure a ground hog case—them French folks cared nothing about Sam singing southern spirituals—it meant 'work, nigger, or starve!'

"I would show my letter of recommendation and get a try out as a waiter. But when they saw how much I could eat, they would throw me out. In the meantime, I just had to pick up all the nigger French I could learn. Finally, after scraping and starving through Paris, I went down to Monte Carlo and landed in the biggest and best restaurant there.

"It come easy to me to work in restaurants—you know I was always looking for some place to eat, Mr. Jefferson!

"Well, sir, take it or leave it, in six months' time, black Sam was the headwaiter in the swellest restaurant in all that Monte Carlo city! I kept trying to learn good French, managed to pick up fair German and a little Italian, Spanish and Russian. And did I make my manners that Miss Annie and my Mammy had taught me so well work for me every minute! My smiling politeness was truly on that job, Mr. Jefferson. I made it my business to remember all them curious names of all them folks from everywhere, and particularly the big gamblers.

"Greeting them with a bow and a smile, I would give them some big title from their native land in their own language. 'How did you come out today?' I would say, and if they looked happy, I would give them their same lucky seat. But if I smelt they were sad, I'd whisper, 'Let me shift your seat, please sir, and them cards are sure going to turn your way this very day.'

"Mighty near all of them would laugh at my nigger talk in their language, but you will find, Mr. Jefferson, all over this wide selfish world, with all colors and kinds of folks, that politeness and knowing your place will win all the way.

"Our biggest and best customer in that place was a Russian nobleman from the royalty of Russia. Don't make no difference about his name, cause he's dead now. But you would just not believe what a fancy that Russian man took to this here Sam, and what a friend he proved to be. That Russian nobleman knew that gambling game! And he called me in his Russian language, his 'Good Luck Friend.'

"I studied the stars, I read the grinds in his coffee, I even watched the wine bubbling in his glass, and I begged 'sweet-luck' to roll his way. Sometimes I had to tell him, 'Lay low, today, friend of mine, and play 'em light.' And honest to Gawd, Mr. Jefferson, that man got so he would do just what I say.

"After a while, he began to give me ten percent of his winnings and then he raised it to one fourth. Well, white folks, if I

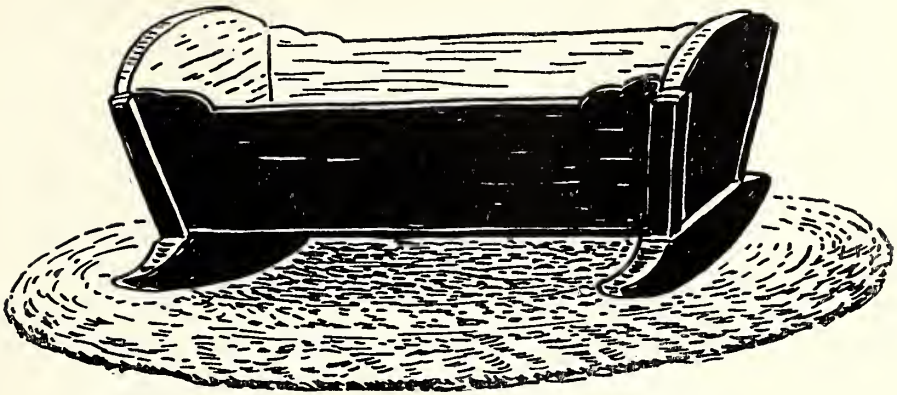
told you the amount of them francs that Russian gambler cashed into gold Russian rubles, you just wouldn't believe it. And this Sam got plenty of it too.

"That man won so regular and so many got to following of his system, that the Manager of the Monte Carlo gambling hall had to plot to keep him out and stay away. When he saw this, he started begging me to go to Moscow with him and start my own gambling parlors.

"Well, sir, I just did that, and I had one of the best places in all Russia. I got married and had five children. Then the new Russian government came around and told me to get out. I had two million Russian rubles saved up in the bank.

"I got a little of it out and come down here to Constantinople and that's my story and here I is. And all I have ever done, Mr. Jefferson, was to follow what Miss Annie and Mammy-Leethy taught me: make my manners open the door, practice my politeness with all people everywhere, and know my place and keep it.

"And now, please sir, you tell me all you can about the folks back home."



MOTHERS

Along with Miss Annie, Mammy-Leethy did not have to learn people, white or black. They both knew folks of all kinds and colors and when they sat down together and sized up anyone, you could "write it down in the book" as mighty near the truth.

There was trouble, of course, as there is bound to be in such a large family-community. But from stealing stamps out of Mars Frank's Office, to meat out of the smoke house to goods out of the store, they "saw the signs" and eased the guilty away without any fuss or thought about going to the law. And even when Mammy's own son, Horatio, had to be sent away from the plantation, she played no favorites. He had done wrong—he must go.

In a year or two, a letter came from Horatio saying he was in

the penitentiary. After Miss Annie read Leethy the letter, Mammy simply said, "Well, honey, you knows we done our best to raise him right. Please lets burn de letter an say no mo' erbout it. You know yo own Mammy, Miss Mary Dillard, told me long er go: 'Leethy gal, when you hab done yo very best erbout anyt'ing er anybody, den you can do no mo'. Turn yo back on dat sitterashun an let it erlone!' "

In spite of Mammy's resignation to her troubles, Miss Annie could easily see that Mammy was grieving over Horatio. So she called Leethy to come and sit by her as an inspiration while she wrote the Governor of the State, begging a pardon for Horatio.

The writer wishes it were in his power to repeat that letter to the Governor. It would unlock any iron door—as it did that one and set Mammy's son free. Mammy was inclined to divide her thanks for this boon equally between God and Miss Annie.

Mammy's third son, Marcellus, seemed the only child directly influenced by her religion. Often he would slip into the nursery and sit at Miss Annie's feet while she read the Bible to Leethy. Noting his attention, Miss Annie encouraged Marcellus to educate himself for the ministry. She would have him come and read the Bible and hold prayer on the back porch where all the white and colored could attend. Marcellus proved Mammy's great pride and consolation and he worthily held the respect and confidence of all on the place.

Miss Annie's interest in Mammy's children was a reflection of Mammy's devotion to Miss Annie's large and growing family.

"Gawd bless you, honey. You is all dat way ergin!" was Mammy's whisper to Miss Annie about every other year—meaning that her Mistiss was carrying another baby. And Mammy took over from that moment, until time to oversee the birth itself. During the last irksome days, she would ransack the plantation for entertainment for her burdened Mistiss. One favorite diversion was to have a certain "Sam Buck" come to the back porch to jig and "cut de buck." One year, the new baby was a son they named Jefferson, and since Jeff turned out to be quite a clogger himself, Mammy always maintained he was "marked in de womb."

When Jefferson came into the world, Miss Annie had trouble with her breast, and since Horatio was born to Mammy about the same time, it fell to Mammy-Leethy to suckle both the babies. And she had plenty of milk.

Here is one of the best illustrations of what a constant practical good a black Mammy like Leethy proved in those days.

Bless the days and nights around that fireside! Miss Annie and Mammy, never idle, knitting, mending, making "lighters" out of newspapers, changing the baby from lap to lap or breast to breast; with their heart to heart talks never heard by anyone else, their complete understanding about all people and about all things.

PO' WHITE TRASH

BLACK MAMMY-LEETHY, claiming all the black blue-blood in Virginia, did not care much for the other darkies, and she had no time whatsoever for any of the "po' white trash." But Miss Annie, God bless her, was a friend to all. In fact, she was the only friend many of them had anywhere. In the words of Sis Emma Dillard: "Lawd, Miss Annie, Sis Judy and me shouted in church yistiddy, 'When we do git to heaven, we'll find you de Queen!' "

Among the many, many begging callers on Miss Annie were Miss Gub, Miss Mary and Miss Sallie—and they came entirely too often to suit Leethy. One might bring a little ball of yarn with toothpicks stuck in it, another three hen eggs, and the other a pint

of blackberries which they knew would bring them all they could tote home of everything they wanted.

Mammy had been studying for months some way to stop them from coming so often "er whinin an er beggin an er botherin dat sweet Mistiss so mighty much."

And soon, along toward evening, these three "just drapped by to see how Miss Annie was gittin long," they said as they pretended to be on their way to the store.

Mammy-Leethy had seen them coming. She grabbed the red-haired dusting brush, the longest broom on the back porch, and trotted down to her cabin. There she swung a white sheet around and over her head, strapped it on with a leather belt, fastened the red-haired brush over her bustle. Then hanging some sleigh bells around her neck, grabbing a cow bell in her left hand and the Marster's horse-whip in the right, she straddled the broom stick and set off on a gallop toward the house.

Ringing the cow bell, slashing at the stick with her riding whip, stamping up and down on the back porch, she alternately moaned and yelled:

"I'se er hanted hoss
Er red-tail hanted hoss
Er gwine ter gallop my way through hell!"

The visitors gathered at the nursery windows, startled, peering through the twilight at the wild-woman. Then Mammy gal-

loped right in among them, raising her voice to terrific shrieks, ringing the cowbell and chanting:

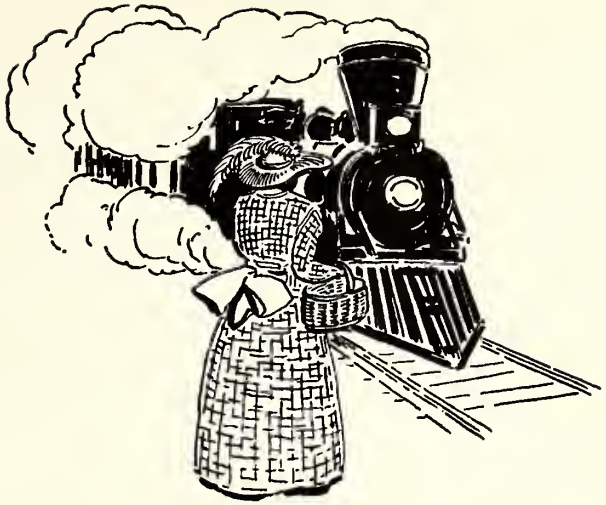
"I'se er hanted hoss
Er red-tail hanted hoss
All yer git on bode
An ride ter hell wid me!"

Miss Annie, catching on, pretended to hide under the table. But the three visitors made a run for the front door, tore down the walk and fled out on the road, hollering and screaming with fright. It was several moons before those trying begging visits started again.

Miss Annie, trying to be serious: "Leethy, you should be ashamed of yourself, scaring those poor women that way." And then she broke out laughing in spite of herself.

"Well you do know, honey, tis jes dem kind er folks dat will sap de very life out'en yer. And dey neber knows when ter stop."

But of course, Miss Annie continued to send the sacks and trays of food around by Fernaldo. Although whenever they saw Leethy with him, they would not open their doors.



EXCURSION

SPRING TIME found all the darkies in six counties around talking about "dat scursion train to de twin-city." The Big Mistiss took as much pleasure in the negro's excitement as they did. She felt the time had come for Mammy to have a little trip and told her so.

"Now, Leethy Lady," Miss Annie always treated black Mammy with great dignity and respect, "you must start right now to get ready for that excursion trip. Wear that new corset and dress I gave you and the red hat from Buttercup. You just tell Fernaldo that the Master and I say he's to stay at home and take care of everything. You pack the best picnic basket this place affords and ask for anything you want."

"Lawd Gawd, honey, I jes don't know. I'se nebber bin dat fur away from home befo, an you knows dem city slickers is mighty cuius—but I sho would love ter go!"

"Well, Leethy, say no more about it. You are going. I've laid aside the money for the ticket and I'm going to loan you my plush pocketbook with the gold chain."

From that moment, Mammy lived on the stars. The excursion was still six weeks away, but it held all the interest and talk among the darkies in the whole country side.

Every Saturday night, Black Mammy would go to the bottom of the trunk, gently and lovingly pull out the new corset and dress, and the pink silk drawers with wide ruffles and put-on them all. Then she would pat and primp and finally parade to the Big House so that Miss Annie could look everything over, make some suggestions, and give her approval.

Fernaldo, mad and pouting because he couldn't go, moped around and mumbled to himself: "Dat ar ole giddy 'oman! She better watch her step. She's sho gwine ter peacock herself into trouble widout me ter take keer ob her." Then, changing his tune, "Whatcher gwine ter bring me back, Leethy 'Oman? Sides dat bottle er likker an dem long kid gloves?"

To all this Leethy only rolled her eyes and replied, "Be yerself, black boy, an know yer place. Dis Lady Leethy gwine ter lead dat peerade up an down dat main street. Gwine ter strut myself fur

an wide an shake my hind parts from ev'y side. Jes may git myself nuther man, Jealous One, an nebber come back!"

Mars Frank let Leethy-Lou ride in the rubber-tired carriage pulled by Rowdy and Kate, the favorite horses, and he had Fernaldo drive. Black Mammy, strapped and squeezed into that new corset, silk dress, and pink drawers—all entirely too tight to be comfortable—nevertheless looked fresh and fancy, with her red feathers flying high.

What a day! Hot weather was just beginning. The train was crowded; with perspiration and smells seeping through everyone. After a full day in the city, they landed home long after midnight, dead tired and fagged out, leaving a few of their members behind, victims of drink or fights.

It took Leethy three whole days and nights to steady herself so she could come on to the Mistiss and work at the Big House. All the other darkies gave glowing descriptions of their trip and told some mighty big tales. But Mammy was very quiet.

Miss Annie took particular pains to let everything and everybody quiet down and waited until she and Mammy could be alone and undisturbed before she asked: "Leethy, what actually happened on the excursion trip? Why are you so quiet about it?"

"Want me ter tell yer zactly how it all twas, honey? Well, incourse you know, Mistiss, jes like you told me, I had on dat new corset, dat putty silk dress you gin me, I eben wo my pink silk draws

wid de wide ruffles. An I packed dat picnic basket jes like you said, plum full er good vittals of any an ebry-t'ing you might keer to mention.

"Well, chile, when we got to de picnic grouns an I started to spread dem sparribs, dat fried chicken, dat coconut cake eroun dat table wid all my jelly an preezerves—all dem ar town niggers gethered eroun jes like flies an bees. Right den an dar, honey, dis here Leethy saw dat les I got mine fust, dere wouldn't be any lef to git!

"So I jes sot in an et enti'ly too much, chile, an et enti'ly too fass. I sho Gawd gormendized my poor body, Miss Annie. An fo you could say 'Jack-Robbinsum' dat basket was as empty as a po white folk's skillet.

"Tired an drowsy an hot as I was, I dropped off into a nap. An bless Gawd, de fust thing I know'd, dem ar fool folks started ter blowin dat ar scursion train whistle!

"I jumped up, grabbed my basket, an pulled my silk skirts way up erbov dem pink draws an lit out fo de train. I was sceered ter def I might be lef behin in dat ar strange place.

"Bless yo soul, Miss Annie, jes as I hit dat flatform, I sunk over in a sho nuff faint. All dem niggers gethered 'roun me an started hollering an er screamin. Dey flung er whole bucket er water all ober me. Dey cut dat new dress an corset into strips an strands. Dey even histed my balmoral an split my pink draws, an

jes as dey was er rubbin my stommick, I come to. Den I knowed what was wrong wid me an I jes had ter tell dat whole gang: 'You niggers kin carry on all de foolishness yer wants, but dis here Leethy Lady has shore Gawd got ter empty her bowels fo she gits any ree-lief!"

In spite of her dignity, Miss Annie just laid over on the bed and shook with laughter. She insisted that Mammy take a good sized "blue mass pill" and follow with some sassafras tea in the morning. And after the misery subsided in her stomach, Mammy let her tongue go with some masterful tales about the twin city trip.

Apparently although she missed the afternoon festivities, her adventures of the morning were many and varied, until the episode of the overstuffed picnic basket.

"All you black folks should er seen dis here Leethy Lady steppin off dat scursion train," she told some of the stay at homes. "Thar stood er long, tall, cullid man, warin a Prince Abbet co't dat swung clear to de groun. Well, didn't dat man rush up, grab me in his arms, an gib me er kiss sounded like a bucket er lard gin the side of de house! An while er pattin my hind-parts, he kep er claimin, " 'T'ank Gawd, here's my cousin Leethy.' An fo Gawd, folks, I didn't member eber I saw dat man!

" 'Why I'se yo cousin Eye-Peter, I'se yer Mammy's brother's sister's chile! De ole Master sole my Daddy to de South Calina Calhouns.'

"Well, sirs an ma'ams, my memry dizzled dazzled all eroun but foun no place fer dat big mouth man. Den when he made a grab fer my basket an my pocketbook at de same time, I knowd dat nigger was gwine ter take me fer a ride sho nuff. So's I jerks myself together, I rar's back an yells loud: 'Brush by, big slicker, you may be er South Calina Calhoun, but you ain't my kind er coon! So on yer way bout yer business!' An dat Jim-swinger swung eroun an slunk erway, right den!

"An den de pee-rade! Did I march in dat pee-rade? Mussy me, frens ob mine, when dat band struck up step high step low, dis here Leethy Lady felt her fuss an feathers er risin an er flyin erway. I swung my sweetness in line an strutted dem city streets wid half dat cullid crowd er follerin close by. At eby corner, I cut one er dem cake walk capers er mine an did dem town niggers gib me er hand! Yes indeedy, dis here Leethy-Lou led dat ar peerade plumb into dem picnic grouns.

"Pantin like er lizzard, jes as I hit de edge ob dat crowd at de picnic grounds, guess yerself who stood thar? Nobody but dat big yeller wench, Sassy Sue Staples!

"Yer know dat gaddin gal who lived up at de forks ob Spoon Creek an all er us call her 'Midnight' cause she hankered an ran after evy'thing dat wo britches, white an black? Well, she was de 'oman, yer member, who swo' her chile on my Fernaldo at de

Pot-Rick-cote-house an made Mars Frank pay fo'ty whole dollars ter git him out.

"Now what did this brazen huzzy do but holler ter me, 'Dar's my Sis Leethy from Lick-Fork Church! Come en kiss me, honey!'

"I jes rech down, to'off two pieces rag from my balmoral, stuck em in my nostril nose so I couldn't smell dat painted faced Midnight slut. Den I rech in my plush pocket book an pulled out Fernaldo's longest razor! Nebber said er word. Jes opened dat razor an started er stroppin it on de sole er my patent leather slippers.

"Bless Gawd, when I looked up, you couldn't see dat ar Sassy Sue's balmoral fer de dust. Dat yeller 'oman sho lit er rag!

"Den I swung my loverly lunch basket on de table er singing:

"Yaller legged chicken, pintin up to heaben,
Sparribs an sausage, swingin high an low,
White frosted cakes, come seben or eleben,
Leethy's vittals gwine ter make a mighty show!

"An git me good, home folks, how dem hongry-gutted niggers did gether eroun! I shut my eyes an said, 'Goodbye, my good vittals, you'se gone now!' "

CONJURATION

To ALL THE DARKIES on the plantation and for miles around, Mammy-Leethy was a sure enough "conjurer." In her cabin closet, sealed with a padlock, she kept her "Asiphedity balls," love powders, "blue mass" goose dung pills, and other potions. Leethy's "linnermint" for all aches and pains, she called "Tiger Fat" and it was supposed to be brewed from the blood and bones of "wild varmints." "Leethy Lady's Love Passhun Powders" was her most popular prescription, more sought after than even her "Harmony Hair Oil" guaranteed to straighten out, lengthen, and slick down all kinky hair and make one smell "like a sweetheart at midnight."

To her favorites she would sometimes yield (for a price) some of her "Red Rose Dewberry Juice," specified for the lips and "other

parts." But she warned any woman who used the "Red Rose" to get married right away, because she was sure to become pregnant.

But Mammy was much more than a witch doctor. She would never perform an abortion, but could actually mid-wife a baby as smoothly as an expert. Calling them by her own names, she used great quantities of epsom salts, castor oil and baking soda. And the darkies would much rather send for Mammy-Leethy than for the best physician in the county.

Her motto was "Wide open bowels, cool head, and warm feet." She was invaluable around the Big House, too. With distances so great and communication so slow, it was a great convenience to Miss Annie with her large family to have someone like Mammy at hand. As a giver of hot mustard foot baths and a rubber with alcohol, Mammy had truly a mesmerising hand and a soothing touch. She could mop a sore throat and massage with mutton tallow as no one else could. Mammy's very sick room presence led Miss Annie to say more than once: "Leethy, you are a born doctor and truly a comfort giver."

Many a midnight hour would find her wearing a "Mother Hubbard," creeping around in her stocking feet, consoling with a soft word of reassurance or an encouraging pat the fever-tossed child. And she never made a mistake in the medicine chest, though she could not read at all.

ANESTHETIC

THE RECIPROCAL AFFECTION that existed between Miss Annie and Leethy must be clear by now. On Leethy's part this was an almost idolatrous devotion. And indeed who could help loving her! The Big Mistiss was the mother, not only of the large household and plantation, but of all that community around the place. Possessed of a personality that made everyone in all walks of life thank the living God they knew her, Miss Annie was deservedly the most popular person in that part of the state.

Furthermore, she was truly "good to look at." Aristocratic and well groomed she always looked like a queen, even when wearing a simple calico dress, with a white apron and just a sprig of white jesamin pinned on her breast.

Mammy was particularly proud of Miss Annie's small feet, for which Mars Frank took great delight to have all her shoes hand-made. Her shoes were about the only part of her wardrobe that did not fit Leethy, and sooner or later, Leethy had hinted or openly begged her way through most of it.

"Lawsy, honey," she would say admiringly, turning one of the small slippers in her hands, "you sho is er Cinderella chile! Jes can't git but two er my fingers in yo' shoes. Dese here black ham feet er mine must er spredded in de mud er long time."

Without doubt, Leethy would gladly have lain down her life for her adored Mistiss. And the time came when, to Leethy at all events, the chance appeared to do just that.

It is hard to realize today how many great strides the science of medicine has made over the days of the Plantation South. So many things taken for granted now were only in their experimental stages then. For instance, anesthetics may have been used in the larger cities at that time, but in the country towns, even the word was unknown.

One day, quite a painful tooth forced Miss Annie to go to a Winston-Salem dentist. This was a serious trouble then, and of course Mars Frank and Mammy-Leethy accompanied her, all of them driven by Fernaldo, resplendent in his high hat, brass buttons and long kid gloves.

After a tedious examination, the doctor who was much ad-

vanced and up to the minute in his profession, said seriously, "I think this operation will require an anesthetic."

Mammy, holding Miss Annie's hand, began to moan and roll her eyes at the unfamiliar word. Even Mars Frank looked upset.

"What does that mean, Doctor?" he asked.

The doctor attempted to reassure him. "Why it's nothing—she just goes out—becomes unconscious for a while."

The Big Boss hesitated and Leethy took him aside and whispered to him for a moment. He nodded and turned to the dentist. "Well, Doctor, suppose you try that stuff on me first then Leethy here, and we will run no risk about the lady."

But Leethy interrupted. "No suh, Big Boss, please suh, let de doctor man try it on Leethy first. Send dis here black 'oman on to glory befo he hurts dis here honey!"

No anesthetic was given, but Miss Annie suffered intensely.

Just as the three stepped out of the doctor's office, Fernaldo appeared, coming out of the colored entrance of a barroom across the street. And he was not alone. A big yellow woman was reeling on his arm!

Mammy, who was tensed and weeping with anxiety over her pain-wracked mistress, completely lost her head. She jumped for the carriage whip and went after the guilty pair. It was all Mars Frank and two policemen could do to get her inside the carriage. Fernaldo crept trembling back on his seat and started the horses

for home. But Mammy cried all the way, deeply mortified at her husband's behavior.

"Fer Gawd's sake, honey chile, what mus I do wid dat Fernaldo debbil? Here you is a dyin in pain an dat triflin nigger er scandalizin our name. Please, Mars Frank, w'ar out dat gold head cane o' yourn on him!"

Fernaldo had a hard road to travel for some time, and Mammy "rode" him so hard, Miss Annie had finally to beg her to stop.

FERNALDO FINDS THE WAY

It was a much humbled Fernaldo who went about his tasks around the Plantation that Spring. He had really been ashamed of himself for getting drunk in Winston-Salem while Miss Annie, whom he revered deeply, was so sick. And when he found that she had "tuk up" for him against his bitter-tongued wife, his gratitude was deep and his penitence deeper. Mammy had subsided into a martyred, long suffering tone with him. All in all, the times were just right for the consummation of Mammy's most heartfelt wish.

As the dogwood began to bloom and the sap began to stir in the trees, the Reverend Samuel Hezehiah Skillet from Patrick County, came to preside over the yearly Big Camp Meeting at the Lick-Fork Church. This was the annual foot washing revival, the

very climax of all the church activities in that part of the state. And the plantation darkies came to stay the whole week from miles around. They came in white-topped wagons, in surreys, on mule-back, and afoot. All that could not visit in the homes of the local brethren and sistern, brought their food and camped on the church grounds. No Big Boss in the countryside even tried to carry on any work. The entire week was simply given over to the "Great-Lick-Fork-Foot-Washing-Camp-Meeting."

The meeting always wound up with a great baptizing Sunday in Mayo River. And this, of course, was the star week of all the year for Mammy-Leethy.

As the time approached, the spirit within her began to surge and struggle for some sure enough shouting. She sang by the hour:

"I'se longin ter tell dat story
Bout my dreams in glory!"

For years, Mammy had yearned to bring Fernaldo into the flock and fold of the church, and she had always begged him to come to these camp meetings. This time when he refused, she started bringing back home with her some of the best singing and shouting sisters and brothers and they would gather around Fernaldo trying to help him "fin' de way." Such singing and moaning and holy dancing, coupled with Fernaldo's bad conscience and sense of guilt about his Winston-Salem misbehavior, finally broke down his resistance and he followed meekly to the meeting.

Now, while the Reverend Skillet was not much larger than a pint of cider, he was an exhorter of high standing and had a voice that reached out loud and wide. When he did "git right" he could swing and holy roll his congregation "right on into glory land."

He grew a billy-goat goatee on his chin which he kept greased and perfumed. His velvet-collared Prince Albert, while just a trifle green and frazzled, almost reached the ground. The little parson touched it all off by wearing women's high-topped button shoes. Rolling his eyes, showing all the white, Brother Skillet could "hist" a mean hymn and sing a spiritual that swept his listeners off their feet.

When he saw the notorious sinner, Fernaldo, at the meeting, he set out to spread himself to his utmost. He preached particularly and personally to Fernaldo, exhorting all to "gether eround de po sinner an hole his han's an help him to git ercross."

It was all too much for Fernaldo. He "came through," and fell over in a spiritual swoon. The congregation was jubilant: "Brother Fernaldo done foun de way! Dat ar sinner man! Goin let dem likkers an ladies erlone!" And high and clear above all was Mammy's rejoicing voice: "Jes lemme hug dat sweet man in glory!"

After Fernaldo, the big sinner, professed and denied the devil, many others under the influence of such a great conversion and the excitement, came into the fold, making the meeting the great

success of years. Brother Hezekiah Skillet and Sis Leethy especially were "steppin on de stars ob glory."

The procession to the river for the baptizing began. Brother Fernaldo being the largest and heaviest, both as to physical bulk and weight of sins, led all the converts with Reverend Skillet holding his hand on one side and Mammy-Leethy on the other. Thronging about the band of the new chosen were nearly all the colored for miles around, shouting and singing and yearning to "see dat ar sinner man wash all his sins erway."

Brother Fernaldo and his two hundred pounds were held back for the grand finale and there were some forty for the frail little preacher to handle first. At last Fernaldo's time came. Brother Skillet came back to the shore to get him. All the congregation, led by Mammy, gathered closer to the river side, lifting their voices in exhortation:

"Bury him deep down in Jordan,
Wash all dem black sins erway!"

The exhausted parson led Fernaldo out into the midst of the shallow river so all could see, further than he had gone with the others. Alas—he had forgotten that a deep sucker hole lay beneath the waters at that point. As the words of baptism were pronounced and Fernaldo was swung under the sacred stream, his footing gave way and he plunged completely from sight!

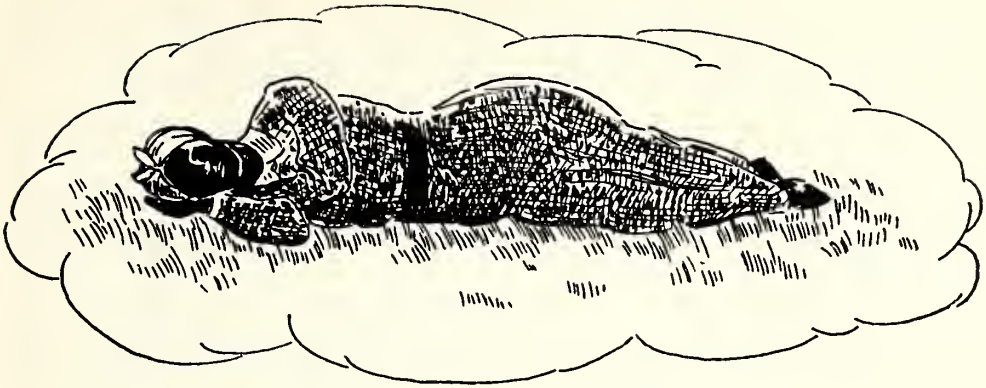
As neither Fernaldo nor the parson in the drama could swim,

Fernaldo came very near drowning before some of the others rushed in and pushed and pulled him out.

Fernaldo, strangling and struggling, as soon as he got his breath ashore, forgot his religion and shouted: "Ef yer fool folks don't stop dis here foolishness, den some white-folk's nigger is er gwine ter git hurt yit!"

However, the stress of the moment was excuse for him and when he had recovered from his scare, he even took some pride in telling of what a difficult time he had had in ridding himself of the devil and getting on the right path. And for the most part, Fernaldo did walk the straight and narrow after that, and attended to all his church duties side by side with Mammy-Leethy.

The revival wind-up was the foot-washing night. It was a touching scene when, with simple humility, the deacons and elders first washed the preacher's feet and then all the chosen ones'. There in that well-kept country church could be found true consecration. Some backsliders, yes, but for most the very sacred spot of hope.



LEETHY'S VISION

SOME of the very best people in that part of the world, both white and colored, were known as "hard shell primitive Baptists." The rules of this branch of the church required that in order to be eligible for membership, you must have some personal contact with the powers above and you must be able to relate that experience to the satisfaction of the members, to really show that you were "a chosen one."

Leethy was one of the charter members of the Lick-Fork Primitive Baptist Church and she had related her own experience at every revival for years, always winding up shouting until she fell over in a "sanctified swoon." It was a beautiful story she told, simple and direct as a child's. And Leethy, who had real poetry in her nature, longed to see it "writ down." This desire was intensified whenever the "Zion's Land Mark," state publication of the Primitive Baptist Church, came out. Mammy had Miss Annie

read every word to her as she thought how she would love to have her own vision published in "de lan mark ob de chosen ones."

During the triumphant revival at which Fernaldo was won over, with the spirit "loomin bright" all through her, Leethy finally got Miss Annie to take a pad and pencil to the cutting-out table and write it all down.

"Yes, yo gwine ter write it down, honey chile, jes like I tell yer, please ma'am.

"Bless Gawd, he done come ter me years ergo, my little one, an struck me dead. Dis here Leethy laid out in de yard all day long. All dem folks gethered eroun, but I couldn't open my eyes.

"Fust thing yer know, sweet sister, I was a little white dove, a snow white dove an I flew to hebben an lit in my Jesus' shirt bosom an flitted from side to side.

"Write it down, please, little one, jes like it wuz.

"Den Jesus took me by de han, not dis here han, honey, but my sper-it-ual han, an he led me down to er bootiful branch where flowers war er bloomin an white angels er dancin on ebery side.

"Jesus kep er pattin my head an er croonin ter me all de time:

" 'You's de chosen one, you's de chosen one!'

"We crep on down to de Ribber Jordan, he er leadin me, oh blessed one, not wif dis here han, honey, but wid my sper-it-ual han.

"Dat ar Ribber Jordan was er runnin ober de puttiest rocks er gold you ebber seed in yer life, little one.

"Is you writin it down good?

"We followed dat ribber on down to dat big wide ocean. Dat ocean was er groanin an er moanin ter me:

" 'Leethy, chile, you is one ob de chosen ones, chosen ones!'

"Bless Gawd, you hear me, honey, standin right dar at de edge ob dem big moan-ing waves, was a little white sheep, er snow white sheep, Miss Annie, wid a red bridal an a red saddle on.

"Den de Lawd Jesus whispered in my year,

" 'My little Leethy, Leethy, chosen chile, git on dat sheep.'

"Dem big waters parted back, Miss Annie, an I rid clean cross dat ocean, high an dry into de promised lan. Nebber got my feet wet, bless Gawd, not narry toe!"

By this time Miss Annie's eyes were full of tears and Mammy sat rocking to and fro, almost fainting with the joy of her dream. Her practical Mistress took the situation in hand and a glass of wine and the camphor bottle revived her. And so she sat, soothed and satisfied. Her "entitlements" to heaven were going to be sent to the "Zion's Land Mark" where everyone could know of them.

With a happy heart and the spiritual sparkle in her eyes, she went about her tasks the rest of that day crooning to herself:

"Jesus, I done packed my trunk,
I'se gwine to dat banquittin hall
Dat's made wid neder nail nor hammer,
Wid dem Perly Gates open ter-all"

This was Mammy-Leethy. It is fitting to leave her here, busy in her devoted service to the beloved household.

But we like to think of her, too, in that other Household, going about the work of her Heavenly Master. For be sure, wherever Mammy was, she could not be idle. And if there are baby angels in her Promised Land, it is easy to picture her in their midst—cuddling some, cheering others, loving all.